

In connection with these large captures of horses, it should be noted that only about 20 per cent. are fit for remount purposes, the remainder being brood mares, foals, &c.

Having obtained fresh supplies at Groot Vlei, Vredefort Road, and Kopjes Stations, General Elliot continued his march westward with the twofold object of intercepting any Boers who might seek to cross the river to escape from General Fetherstonhaugh's force, which was then sweeping down from Lichtenburg towards Klerksdorp, and of placing his columns in their assigned positions for the contemplated drive southward from the line of the Vaal to the Modder River. General Broadwood passed the Vaal at the difficult and little-used Vermaas Drift, whilst Colonels Lowe and De Lisle crossed the river lower down at Coalmine Drift. By the 24th July General Elliot's troops were concentrated at Klerksdorp, having captured, since leaving the railway, as a result of numerous surprise visits by patrols to likely localities, 15 prisoners, 120 horses, 25 cases of dynamite, some stock, vehicles, and ammunition.

Towards the middle of July our information pointed to a contemplated reinforcement of the raiders in Cape Colony by picked bands of volunteers from both the Orange River Colony and Transvaal. Further reports stated that the men proceeding from the south-western portion of the Transvaal would pass through Hoopstad, and that General Smuts from the Losberg would join the expedition. Colonel Henry, who had left Bloemhof for Christiana on the 8th July, with the intention of operating to the north-west of the latter town, was accordingly recalled to watch the Hoopstad district. Having summoned the Kimberley column from Warrenton to join him as soon as possible, he crossed the Vaal at Christiana on 16th July, and moved east to Aaronslaagte, 23 miles south-west of Hoopstad. In this neighbourhood he captured three prisoners, 12 wagons, 70 horses, and some stock.

Major Paris, R.M.A., with the Kimberley column, left Warrenton on 19th July, and, after an engagement with 150 of the enemy, who were gallantly driven from a strong position by Dennison's Scouts, effected a junction on the 24th with Colonel Henry at Palmietpan near Aaronslaagte. Operating from Palmietpan on the 25th July with 230 mounted men, two guns, a pom-pom, and 30 infantry carried in carts, Major Paris again found the enemy in some strength at Wolvepan, under Commandants Badenhorst and Erasmus and Field Cornet van Aswegan. He attacked on three sides, maintained a running fight, in which the 74th Squadron Imperial Yeomanry, the Kimberley Light Horse, and Dennison's Scouts seem to have been well handled, and finally forced the enemy to beat a very hasty retreat. Seven dead burghers were left upon the field, and Field Cornet van Aswegan was captured; Major Paris' casualties being one man killed and three wounded. Colonel Henry then moved to Hoopstad, and, on the 31st July, the Kimberley column returned to the railway at Windsorton Road.

Other columns were also set in motion to gain touch with any parties of the enemy who might be actually trying to find their way south from the Transvaal.

On the 21st July Brigadier-General Gilbert Hamilton left Klerksdorp for Wolmaranstad, where he arrived on the 23rd. Here he was informed that 30 volunteers had already left for Cape Colony, but the information obtainable

was not very reliable. A successful night march, however, for which Brigadier-General Hamilton left Wolmaranstad at midnight on the 25th July, terminated in the complete surprise of Commandant Potgieter's laager near Blinklip at dawn on the 26th. All the enemy's wagons and supplies, 70 horses, and 1,520 cattle were captured; 11 Boers were killed or wounded, and 10 were made prisoners; General Hamilton's casualties being only two men wounded.

With a view to watching the line of the Vaal further to the east, Lieutenant-Colonel Western had left Klerksdorp on the 11th July. He reconnoitred along both banks of the river up to Venterskroon without gaining touch with any party of the enemy; then, returning to Coalmine Drift, on the 17th July he pushed out beyond Bothaville with his mounted troops, and searched the country towards Hoopstad and Bultfontein. Observing no signs of any movement from the north of the Vaal, Colonel Western moved back on the 25th July to Coalmine Drift.

The various movements already described had now brought General Elliot's columns and those of Colonels Henry and Western into suitable positions for the general sweep south from the Vaal on the west of the main line. General Elliot assumed control of the operations, for which he was reinforced by Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson's column from Klerksdorp and Lieutenant-Colonel Garratt's from Reitzburg. Colonel Sir Henry Rawlinson, set free at the conclusion of General Fetherstonhaugh's movement from Lichtenburg to Klerksdorp, which will be described later on, had marched from Klerksdorp on the 24th July. He crossed the Vaal, after a skirmish, near Lindique Drift, and then moved by Parys to Vredefort Town.

Before starting, General Elliot also organised from the troops composing the three columns under his command a fourth one, consisting of the 1st Dragoon Guards and two guns, under Lieutenant-Colonel Owen.

On the 29th July six of the eight columns placed at General Elliot's disposal were in line facing south, the right resting on the Vaal south of Wolmaranstad, and the left (Colonel Sir H. Rawlinson) at Vredefort. Colonel Henry's column was to join in on the extreme right at Hoopstad on the 1st August, and Lieutenant-Colonel Garratt was directed to follow in rear of the left flank on a wide front, to deal with any parties of Boers who might succeed in breaking north again through the other columns. To close the avenues of escape to the east it was further arranged that as General Elliot moved south, columns under Major Pine-Coffin and Colonel Barker should issue from the main line at Kroonstad and Vet River respectively, and then march parallel to the railway somewhat in advance of Sir Henry Rawlinson's left. To the west the roads were to be blocked by Brigadier-General Plumer, who was to move out from Modder River Station to the Boshof-Makauw's Drift road, and establish communication with Colonel Henry's right.

The presence of Brigadier-General Plumer at Modder River, which has not yet been alluded to, requires some explanation. In anticipation of these combined operations in the Orange River Colony, his force had been moved south by rail from the Transvaal after his return from Carolina in the second week of July. He arrived at Bloemfontein on the 18th July, and on the 23rd left there for Modder River Station, marching *via* Bains Vlei, Kruger's Drift, Poplar Grove, Koodoosrand, and Pandamfontein. He